

. A N
E X T R A C T

FROM A LATE

S E R M O N

On the DEATH of the Reverend

Mr. JOSEPH EMERSON,

Pastor of the First Church in MALDEN.

Who Died very suddenly

On Monday Evening July 13th, 1767.

In the 68th Year of his Age.

Delivered at Malden,

By JOSEPH EMERSON, A. M.

Pastor of the Church at PEPPERELL.

ZACH. 1. 5. *Your Fathers, where are they? And
the Prophets, do they live for ever?*

MAL. 1. 6. *A Son honoreth his Father.*

B O S T O N :

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WE have now finished what was proposed for the subject of this day's meditation.* All the improvement I intend, is, a particular application to this Church and Congregation, and others more nearly concerned in the late bereavement with which we have been visited.

Dear brethren, of this Church and Congregation,

The few hints you have had this day, may serve to comfort you under your great loss, and lead you to the consideration of your present duty.

It hath pleased the sovereign Disposer of lives, in a sudden surprizing manner, to call for the life of your beloved Pastor; one who hath for many years laboured in this part of Christ's vineyard; one who was greatly revered and respected by most of you; one whom you will not soon forget; no—you cannot forget him.

While we look back and consider what he was, as it ministers matter of thanksgiving to the father of lights, who so liberally bestowed his gifts and graces upon him, and so long continued him a burning and shining light;

* From this Text, Joshua 1. 2. *Moses my Servant is dead.*

so it cannot but open the flood-gates of sorrow, and aggravate our grief. Yet to recollect his character, may, by the blessing of God, answer many valuable purposes.

It pleased the sovereign spirit of God early, very early, to sow the seeds of grace in his heart. By a blessing upon the endeavours of his pious parents, he might be said to fear the Lord from his childhood, and to be acquainted with the holy scriptures from his youth. If I do not misremember, he was able to pray in the family, in the absence of my grandfather, before he was *eight years* of age, to the edification and astonishment of those who attended on the exercises of the family. As he grew in years and stature, he grew in favour with God and man. He was admitted into college when he had but little more than finished his *thirteenth year*, out of which he came with an unspotted character. He early devoted himself to the gospel-ministry, and directed his studies this way; and began to preach before he was *eighteen*, to general acceptance. It was not long before he had a unanimous call to settle at Wenham, which call he tho't it his duty to negative; and took up with the invitation of the people in this town, to give himself to the service of their souls, and was solemnly set apart to this work October 31st,

1721,

1721, in great love, peace and unanimity, while he was yet not *twenty-two years* of age. The Rev. Mr. Symns of Bradford, who was intimately acquainted with him from his childhood, gives this testimony of him, in his address to him, in the close of that sermon, "We all bless God with you and for you, and for all the smiles of his providence upon you— for your early and exemplary piety, and desirable accomplishments for the work of the ministry." In this candlestick the Lord fix'd him, and here the Lord continued him for above 45 years, with but very little interruption, from bodily infirmities: for the whole of this term, he was taken off from his public labours but two sabbaths. During this time he eminently fulfilled his ministry, and approved *himself a workman that needed not to have been ashamed*. He set before him the character of the gospel bishop in Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus, very evidently copied after it, and few came nearer the original. He was sound in the faith, and *held forth the form of sound words*, handed down from our fathers. He was particularly attached to those doctrines which are called Calvinistic: You know how warmly he preached up the real divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; the special agency of the holy spirit in the conversion

conversion of sinners ; the sovereignty of God ; the guiltiness and depravity of human nature since the apostacy ; the necessity of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ in order for the sinner's justification in the sight of God ; and the perseverance of the saints : You know how zealously he preached up holiness of heart and life ; holiness he loved, perfect holiness was what he aspired after ; therefore holiness was what he pressingly recommended to others ; and always inculcated it upon gospel principles. He fetched all his doctrines from the word of God : what he received from that unerring rule, that delivered he unto his people, *not teaching* for doctrines the commandments of men. To this end he was much in the study of the sacred oracles ; was uncommonly diligent in his preparations for the public ; did not bring you that which cost him nothing ; he continually labored to store himself with the most useful knowledge, and brought *out of his treasures things new and old*. He never was more in his element than when in his study ; and gave himself incessantly to reading and meditation. He studied to suit his discourses to the particular circumstances of his people ; and to the providences of God, respecting the nation and land ; and to adapt them to the capacities of his

his hearers. He delivered the whole counsel of God, and *kept back nothing* which he tho't *was profitable for you* : and rightly divided the word, giving to every one his portion in due season. He was a *Boanerges*, a son of thunder, to the workers of iniquity ; a *Barnabas*, a son of consolation, to the mourners in Zion. He bore his testimony against the prevailing sins of the times and place, left no sin unreproved in public : those who did sin were *rebuked before all*, nor did he fear the face of any man. You remember how zealously the sabbath before, which was but the day before he died, he was reprovng those householders who neglected the worship of God in their families. (I hope such a dying admonition had its desired effect, and there is not such an heathen now among you to reprove.) He was abundant in his labours ; besides his sermons on the Lord's day, what a multitude of lectures hath he preached ? some more publicly, others in private ; you had the gospel brought to your houses whenever you desired it. He greatly rejoiced in the gifts and graces of others, and chearfully complied with the desire of those who wanted to improve them, whenever he was satisfied as to their call to dispense the word. Some of you are witnesses how welcome you were to his study, when labor-
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ing under spiritual difficulties, and with what faithfulness he dealt with you : endeavouring not to quench the *smoking flax*, or break the *bruised reed* ; nor to speak peace when he tho't his divine master would not. And he did not content himself to wait your coming to him, but would visit you at your own houses, and as he had opportunity, administer those reproofs, counsels and warnings, which he saw necessary for you. He was very conscientious in visiting the sick and afflicted, and skilful in administering instructions and consolations proper for the occasion.

As by the grace of God he was faithful, so it pleased the Lord to honor him in his service : We have reason to think he was the instrument of the conversion and edification of many. Many, we trust who went before him to the world of glory, are now, and always will be blessing God, that they saw his face and heard his voice : And some who are living own him for their spiritual father, and hope to spend an eternity together in the high praises of God.

Some of you remember how rejoiced he was when many years ago there was a remarkable revival of religion in the land, of which this place had a share. His heart was greatly engaged in it, and endeavoured by all means to promote

promote it ; then was he more abundant in his public and private labors, was never weary in preaching to, and conversing with precious souls.

In governing the church, he showed tenderness and impartiality ; thro' his influence you have enjoyed much peace and tranquility. In his younger days, his courage, wisdom, prudence and steadiness were very much tried, and were very conspicuous, when so considerable a part of the church and congregation rent themselves off from him and their brethren. Tho' it was not from any disgust at, or uneasiness with him as their minister, yet it caused him no little trouble and uneasiness. He behaved with prudence, sobriety and patience, and managed the intricate and difficult affairs of that day, as far as he was concerned as the pastor of the church, with that impartiality, as to obtain the approbation of some of the wisest and best men in the country, assembled in council ; and I doubt not, of God, and his own conscience. Some later trials which greatly exercised his patience, and made very deep impression upon him, I believe were found to *praise, and honor and glory* ; his ripening for heaven was very apparent.

In his more private character, he was very exemplary. In the little, very little concern

he had with worldly affairs, *integrity & uprightness* preserved him. He had a remarkable tenderness of conscience with respect to truth & righteousness between man and man; and in some instances it seemed to border upon scrupulosity. He was very affable, pleasant and courteous in his whole behavior, to all with whom he conversed. Where he had received injuries, he heartily forgave; nor would he suffer the least shadow of revenge. As the head of a family, he *walked in his house with a gospel perfect heart*: as an husband, how faithful, how kind and tender: as a father, how grave, how compassionate and loving, bringing us up in *the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, constantly praying with and for us; as a master, he kept up his authority with the greatest condescension: as a neighbour, friendly and benevolent; remarkable for charity and alms-giving; he devoted a full tenth of his income to pious and charitable uses; was very exact in keeping the account; wise and prudent in the distribution of it.

To sum up his character, he was a man of prayer, he prayed always in the scripture sense. Such who were nearest to, and most conversant with him, could observe that his stated times for secret prayer, was not less than five or six times every day. He never would en-
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gage in any special affair, without first seeking direction, and the blessing of God upon it : Besides the innumerable ejaculatory prayers we have reason to think he put up, he walked with God all the day long. And sometimes he would set apart whole days for prayer with fasting.

But was he without failings ? No. He had them, he felt them, he lamented them, he got a marvellous victory over them : was ready to confess his faults, and when unguarded words drop'd from him, would ask forgiveness, even of his children and servants.

These are some imperfect strictures of the character of that servant of the Lord, who for so many years was your faithful pastor, who was so suddenly taken from you, taken away, when we might have hoped to have enjoyed him for some years at least ; whom if a long course of faithful services in the church of Christ, and an exemplary life of holiness, are sufficient evidences of hope, we believe is gone from his labors to his reward, gone, *where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest ; where he hath received his acquittance from his judge, well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of your Lord.* Where he does not repent his leaving time so suddenly,

without taking leave of his flock and family. His family, indeed, he did take leave of, in that blessed legacy he left us in his last will and testament : And had he known how abruptly he must leave us, he could not have chosen more suitable words for his farewell. They are these,

“ And now my dear wife and beloved children, I commend you all to the grace and love of God in Christ. I die and leave you ; but the Lord lives still ; and blessed be our rock, and exalted be the God of our salvation. God of his infinite mercy grant we may all have a happy meeting at the right hand of Christ, never, never again to be separated, Amen.”

My dear friends and brethren, will you not all strive to improve by this speaking providence ? Your pastor is dead ; the eyes who have seen him, will see him no more ; the ears which have heard him, will hear him no more : but Christ the great head of his Church, and Shepherd of his people lives still ; lives still to speak unto you : Bear with me, while I do in his name suggest a few things unto you.

Be very thankful to the God of providence and of grace, that you enjoyed the labors of your pastor for so many years, and for all
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the good he was enabled to do among you. You have been signally favor'd of God, in continuing him so long with so very little interruption in his public services. His zeal, vigor and usefulness continued to the last. And hath he not been the instrument of much good? You who have received spiritual advantage by his ministry, will give God all the glory of it, and you hope for an eternity to spend together in the high praises of God, where you will be his crown of rejoicing; and mutually increase each others happiness. O realise that day, when you shall again see his face with joy and not with grief. And let the foresight of it serve to alleviate your present sorrows.

Be much in consideration and self-examination. This should be a time of great searchings of heart with you all. Consider of your whole conduct toward your deceased pastor, and how you have profited by his ministrations. Wherein your consciences accuse you, be humbled before God, and fly to the blood of Christ for pardon.

Be followers of your minister in all those things which were praise worthy. *Be followers of him who thro' faith and patience inherits the promises.* Set before you the heavenly-mindedness, humility, meekness, love, condescension,

descention, forbearance, patience, and resignation to the divine will, which he was eminent for, and labor after an imitation of these virtues.

Be much in prayer. Never was there a time when you had a greater call to earnest, fervent, extraordinary prayer. And I would earnestly recommend it to you, that, before you hear any candidate whatsoever, you set apart a day for humiliation and prayer with fasting ; to humble yourselves under the tokens of the divine displeasure ; to seek of him direction in the great and important work before you of settling a gospel minister ; that he would lead you in the right way, prepare a pastor after his own heart for you, and by his providence direct you to him.

Be very careful to improve all the occasional opportunities you are favored with. Come to the word with unprejudiced, believing, humble dispositions ; receive the word in the love of it, mix it with faith ; let your profiting by the ordinances and providences appear.

Be at peace among yourselves. Study for the things which make for peace. Let no root of bitterness spring up to trouble you. Bear and forbear with one another : Let not different sentiments about indifferent things divide you. Watch diligently that Satan does not sow discord among you. Your union
will

will be your glory and happiness ; and dreadful may be the consequences if you get divided. And finally,

Be very prudent and cautious to whom you commit the care of your souls. Be not sudden and rash in coming to a choice ; weigh the matter thoro'ly. Be satisfied as to the principles of the man you have your thoughts upon : You have a right to know them. If he is for secreting them, you have reason to be jealous that they are not right. And give not your vote for any man, untill you have some evidence that he is a true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is acquainted with experimental religion. Covet earnestly the best gifts, but remember there is something more excellent. May the Lord Jesus, the great head of his church, reside with you, support, comfort, teach and guide you : Continue peace among you, unite you together in the bonds of love : And in his own due time set a man over the congregation ; a man of learning, of true, solid, experimental piety : one like minded with your deceased pastor, one endued with equal, yea superior knowledge, courage, prudence, integrity, tenderness and every necessary qualification for the faithful discharge of his ministry : and one who shall be more abundantly successful ; whose light you shall long enjoy ;
and

and your children after you, be a happy people with a happy minister.

This day's meditations afford matter of comfort to those who are more nearly related to the deceased, The widow and fatherless.

Honored and dear Madam,

Shall I bespeak you as a son, as your eldest son, to whom you have always expressed a singular affection and regard, who now feels very sensibly for you? Shall I speak to you in the name of your departed husband, whose love to you was far beyond what I can express? No, I will rather speak to you in the name of your present living, your always living husband, the blessed Jesus, and say, *Be comforted, be comforted:*

We are all sensible your affliction is great, the stroke is heavy; to be deprived of the husband of your bosom, the guide of your youth, the support of your riper years, one for whom you had so strong an affection, who was so capable and ready to administer instruction and comfort; taken away at a time, when upon many accounts, you seemed particularly to need him, to be your support and comfort under the growing infirmities of advanced age.

But

But there are many considerations, which by the concurrent influences of the spirit of GOD, may afford you strong consolation. Time will suffer me, but just to name some of them. Your heavenly father hath done it.—Your dear companion was continued as long as infinite wisdom thought best.—He finished the work which God gave him to do.—While he did live, he lived to God, and lived for him.—He lived honored and respected with that *good name which is as precious* ointment; and died universally lamented.—He lived to bring up a numerous family, and see all his children got into the world, and in a measure able to take care of themselves.—* There are ten thousand prayers which he hath put up for you, which are as it were on file, which we are waiting the answer of.—And what is the most comforting consideration, you have all reason to hope, that he hath made an happy exchange, gone from a world of darkness, sorrow, death, and sin, to a world of light, joy, life, and perfect holiness. Your loss is great, but his gain

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- * All his surviving children, viz. Seven sons and three daughters, followed him to the grave. The youngest child had his second degree given him at Cambridge, while his father lay by the walls; is now a candidate for the ministry.

is infinitely greater. O now view him at a distance from all penal and moral evil, at a distance from all sickness, pain and sorrow, and all sin; *all tears are wiped from his eyes, sorrow and sighing left his breast.* See him posselt of all that happiness which results from the clear vision and full fruition of the blessed God, the fountain of all blessedness. Behold him *shining as the brightness of the firmament*, and be assured he will shine *as the stars for ever and ever.* He hath joined the happy company of all the fathers, who labored in the same work with him here, joined the company of your honored father,* (whose abundant and zealous services for Christ we remember, and the favor of whose memory is precious in all our churches.) and of the innumerable company of the redeemed of the Lord, where they are singing the *song of Moses and the Lamb*: where he does not wish himself back, (well as he loved you) to this troublesome, sinful world. And if you can by faith view an empty mansion, bought by the Redeemer's blood, to which by and by you will be received, this must comfort, this must

* That eminently laborious, pious and useful minister of Jesus Christ, the Rev. Mr. *Samuel Moody*, Pastor of the first Church in *York*: who died *November 13, 1747*, in the 72d year of his age.

must rejoice you. A few more days must roll over you, you will be with him, see his happiness, and be a partaker with him in it, and which is far better, be with his Lord and your Lord, and see his glory.

While you meditate on these things, your sorrows will be alleviated under your irreparable loss, irreparable, did I say,—no, madam, 'tis not irreparable: There is eno' in Christ abundantly to make it up. He hath better things than what he hath taken from you.

May that blessed Jesus be with you, strengthen you in your bodily weakness, support you under this and whatever future trials he shall see meet to exercise you with, continue the exercise of your reason, lengthen out your life to be yet a great blessing to your children and grandchildren: And in some future time, (grant, gracious God, it may be many years first :) receive you to the ineffable joys of the upper and better world, which will abundantly compensate for the sorrows of this.

The same considerations afford matter of comfort to the bereaved children. O may we dwell much on them! May we be concerned to learn those lessons, which God, who puts us into this school, would have us learn.

Brethren,

Brethren, pray for us, that we may be enabled to follow our dear deceased father in all things wherein he followed Christ. That the everlasting God may be our father and friend. That we may be solicitously concerned to obtain an interest in the divine favor; and have grace to discharge the duties of our various stations in the world. And especially would I earnestly beg an interest in your prayers for *us*, whom the Lord hath called to the gospel ministry; that a double portion of our father's spirit may rest upon us; that our father's God and Saviour, would be with us in the whole course of our ministry. That we may be enabled to study, visit, pray and preach under a realizing view of death, as those who must soon and may suddenly be called to give up an account of our stewardship; and that whenever our master shall call, we may be ready to give up that account with joy, and not with grief.

May those who have or do serve in the family, have the divine supports and divine teachings; may they never forget the councils and warnings which they have received from their deceased master, and the many earnest prayers which he hath put up for them in their hearing; may they labor to get an interest in Christ, that they may again see his face with joy.

joy, and rejoyce with him thro' a boundless eternity.

To conclude,

Let us all devote ourselves unfeignedly to the service of God : binding ourselves unto him in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten ; and in our various stations and relations of life, approve ourselves the faithful servants of the Lord, diligently doing, and patiently suffering, according to his pleasure ; that when we have served God, and our generation according to his will, we may each of us receive the blessed sentence from the mouth of our judge, *well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

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AMEN

